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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE A.A.L.

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VOLUME 52

SEPTEMBER  
1959

NUMBER 9

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# THE ASSISTANT LIBRARIAN

Official Journal of the Association of Assistant Librarians  
(*Section of the Library Association*)

EDITOR: D. HARRISON

Central Library, Manchester, 2.

VOL. 52. NO. 9.

SEPTEMBER, 1959

## *In the Dark*

Undoubtedly one of the most satisfactory features of the library scene in Britain is the existence of something approaching a national library service. Behind the resources of the smallest branch library stand those not only of the rest of its own system, but of the rest of the public and many of the university and special libraries of the country.

But is the reader who enters his small branch library aware of this breadth of material available? A conversation recently overheard between six loyal public library readers strongly suggested that the reputation of the library service as far as they were concerned stood or fell by what they could find on the shelf of their local branch.

A natural reaction, no doubt. We should indeed struggle to provide better and brighter bookstocks everywhere; the public look for books, not catalogue entries, and too many librarians excuse their own inadequacy by crying the wonders of interlending. The object of interlending is to improve the supply of books available. It is only an economy measure in so far as the money saved by avoiding useless duplication can be used to better purpose.

None the less, although we must guard against the abuse of interlending, we should at the same time make the public more aware of the facilities available to them outside the building which they know as "the library." Individual librarians are well aware of this necessity; Warrington's *Book News* for Summer, 1958, *The Coventry Bookshelf* for May, 1959, and Willesden's *Introducing the Library Service* are three recent library publications in which attention is drawn to the availability of books through interlending. There are, of course, other libraries who practise similar publicity, but the total impact on the reader seems so far relatively negligible.

Do we secretly feel the service is not good enough to advertise? Are we afraid of the extra work which more interlending would involve? Certainly some of us are unhappy about the variety of the terms on which the service is available. Some libraries charge the reader postage both ways. Others bear the whole cost themselves and are confronted on occasion by the reader who decides that he "doesn't want it after all!" Some libraries seem to be more rigid than others in the categories of books for which they will apply.

A national library service should be capable of reasonably uniform application from the reader's point of view, and should be good enough to merit more publicity. The reader should be made fully aware that it is immaterial whether a book is in the stock of his own branch, his own system or available through the N.C.L.; provided it comes within the scope of the inter-lending service it is equally available to all library users.

### A.A.L. Events.

September 17th—Chaucer House. A.A.L. Council and Committees.

October 18th—G.L.D. One Day Revision School. (Details from R. H. Millward, F.L.A., Branch Library, Brigstock Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey, and will also appear in the *London Librarian*).

## NOTICE OF ELECTION

Nominations are invited for the following Officers and Councillors of the Association for the year 1960:—

Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer and Hon. Editor.

Nine nationally elected Councillors, three of whom must be under thirty years of age on 1st January, 1960.

A member under the age of thirty may stand for election as national councillor in either category, but if he/she wishes to stand as an "under-thirty" candidate this should be stated specifically, together with the age of the nominee as at 1st January, 1960.

Nominations must be made in writing by two or more members of the Association, countersigned by the nominee, and reach me not later than 15th October, 1959.

JOHN H. JONES, *Honorary Secretary*,  
33, Rosebery Avenue, Worthing, Sussex.

### A.A.L. CORRESPONDENCE COURSES.

#### FULL LENGTH COURSES.

Application for *F.P.E. Registration*, and *Final* courses beginning Autumn, 1959, must be completed and returned by 30th September. Full particulars of the courses offered are given in the current edition of the *Student's Handbook*.

#### FORMS, FEES AND ENQUIRIES.

Application for forms must be accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes and should be sent to the A.A.L., Hon. Education and Sales Officer, Mr. J. S. Davey, F.L.A., 49, Halstead Gardens, Winchmore Hill, London, N.21. The fee for each course is £3 10s. 0d. Students outside Europe taking full length courses are charged 10s. extra for each course.

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An interesting commentary on the recent classification-of-fiction correspondence was provided by the Summer issue of Link (Bristol and District Division Newsletter), which reports that following the separation of light fiction from the rest at Bridgwater "by dint of such economies as buying light fiction in reinforced paper-back editions, it has not so far been necessary to reduce the allocation of funds for other categories of books." We hope and pray that the words "so far" slipped into this account by accident, and that, whatever our light fiction policy, it should not be allowed to interfere with the purchase of "other categories of books."

We apologise for our error in the June *Assistant* which referred to one "Philip Marlowe" (Conference Report, page 118) and which should, of course, have read "Christopher Marlowe." This we must remark was a slip of the typewriter and not lack of knowledge, and hope some at least will believe us!

ED.

## The Last Stage

by K. H. Jones, Westminster City Libraries

"The object of all public library service is to get books used; that is, to get into current circulation and comprehension, in the minds of men, a wider range of ideas of established high quality" (1).

### TOWARDS THE LAST STAGE.

The scientific industrial revolution has, in recent decades, subjected librarianship to new demands, which, through the practice of the special libraries, are steadily revolutionising it. Around the conception of "reference service" there have developed other features of what is comprehensively termed "information service."

Ranganathan, however, regards reference service as only "the penultimate stage in the fulfilment of the library, whose ultimate stage is the purpose of integration of books and humans. . . . The ultimate purpose of a library is to get its books read with profit and pleasure by every member of the community for whom it is intended." (2). That this ultimate stage has received some international recognition is evident from the UNESCO Public Library Manifesto, significantly sub-titled "A Living Force for Popular Education":—

"The public library should be active and positive in its policy and a dynamic part of community life.

"It should not tell people what to think, but it should help them to decide what to think about. The spotlight should be thrown on significant issues by exhibitions, book lists, discussions, lectures, courses, films, and individual reading guidance.

"Reading interests should be stimulated and the library's services publicised through a well-planned public relations programme.

"The public library should link its activities with the work of other educational, cultural, and social agencies. . . ."

The scientific and industrial dynamic which is accomplishing the first revolution in librarianship is also preparing the conditions for this ultimate development of a very different sort, confined mainly to the public library movement. In the first place, the achievements of science and technology can be successfully exploited to worthwhile ends only by a wholly educated community, and not, as in the past, by an educated minority and a merely literate majority.

### THE "POPULAR DEPARTMENT."

In the second place, the division of some large public libraries into several subject departments, catering for the specialist, has led to the creation of an explicitly "Popular Department" as their converse (e.g. in Baltimore Public Library, U.S.A.). In our more empirical English practice the proliferation of "special" departments has left, more or less, a sort of "rump" which has the makings of a "Popular Department." The stock of such a Department may be confined to literature, biography, travel, fine arts, recreations, domestic economy, and so on. Or it may span all the main subject fields in a "popular" aspect.

Thus, subject division in public libraries—an outcome of Ranganathan's "penultimate stage"—has established a place for the "Popular Department" of his "last stage." A beginning has been made in some smaller British public libraries, where the obsolescent functional division into reference, lending, and periodical rooms has been abandoned in

favour of a two-part subject division, so that both a better service can be given to students and other of the more purposive readers and correspondingly more attractive facilities provided in a "Popular Department" or section for the general public.

This "popular librarianship" should not be identified with "extension work." Extension work may be activity which only incidentally boosts the use of the library. It is true that the success of the "Popular Department" will very much depend on extension work directed to its support. "The majority of people," remarks Ranganathan, "have to be prepared by special devices, coaxed personally, and enticed, as it were, into the library." (3). The success of the "Popular Department" will no less depend on other things, however—on its stock, and how it arranges and displays it, seeking always to guide and encourage the readers to a fuller and more satisfying use of that stock, and leading them on to the use of one of the library's special departments when their needs warrant it. Its success will depend similarly on its times of opening (twelve hours a day, seven days a week, as in the U.S.S.R.?) and its design and furnishing. Will it, with its many possible supplementary attractions, provide a place where some of the "missing two-thirds" might find it worthwhile to spend a pleasant and interesting evening? Is it an attractive port of call amidst the Saturday afternoon shopping, to browse round, meet friends, and perhaps chat with the staff about favourite authors and pet subjects? I suppose this is a "Vision Splendid" which most of us idealists toiling in public lending libraries have sometimes glimpsed! Thus the "Popular Department" constitutes the transformer, as it were, between the mass of the non-library-minded public, on the one hand, and the manifold services of the special departments, operating on a different intellectual current, and beyond its grasp.

The collective talents of the staff operating such a Department will include something of the community centre warden, salesman, adult education leader, P.R.O., social worker, and journalist—mature personalities who get along easily with all sorts and conditions of readers. Popular librarianship will thus embrace a variety of outside techniques subordinated to a purpose which is very much a part of librarianship. From time to time we have caught glimpses of the startling progress of popular librarianship in the U.S.A., thanks to the all-pervading sense of business enterprise there, and a natural acceptance of the need for high pressure public relations, advertising, and other extension activity in order to "sell" the public library idea.

No less startling progress has been made in the U.S.S.R., where popular librarianship has not only contributed to an unhappily "monolithic" way of life, but also to an exceptionally high standard of reading taste, by any criteria, and a very high proportion of serious, purposive readers.

#### MAKING PROPAGANDA.

If we are to develop a dynamic popular service, the objectives *must* be clearly defined. In particular it must be made clear that we are not proposing a department for forcible educational feeding for those who so largely escaped it in their youth, neither are we advocating a public brain washing institution, to be fully operative by 1984.

No matter what may be said, however, there will be those professional nihilists who believe that the librarian has no other responsibility than to meet the need of the authority that maintains the library, or, alternatively, to meet the need of its present users (or perhaps the more

highbrow part). They imply that it is not the province of the library profession to define other objectives, based on value judgments, even if other, comparable professions do so in their own fields. Such an abnegation of social responsibility is the malaise of our time. There is a growing unsureness about principles (unless dissolved in qualifications) that leads us too often to avoid discussion of them. What then, in terms of the recognised needs of our time, should be the objectives of the "ultimate stage," and why is it necessary?

(a) **ECONOMIC:** Librarianship will have its historic part to play in the global industrialisation which, as the alternative to nuclear disaster, is on the agenda for the next hundred years. It will involve a drastic reconstruction of the economies of older countries, like our own. Even in highly literate communities the "propaganda" of the "Popular Departments" will attract the worker to the library and introduce him to the special departments which can assist his vocational progress. More important, it will lead the newspaper readers to book reading, and will help to build up the educated community without which economic reconstruction in the atomic age will be impossible.

(b) **POLITICAL:** In the older industrial countries we see democratic institutions continually eroded by the cynicism and apathy of the electorate and impaired by the growth of corporate wealth and an Establishment ideology. We have seen, too, the difficulties of bringing democracy to birth—and keeping it alive—in many economically underdeveloped countries which have won their independence. If these trends are to be met, the citizen must be encouraged to think for himself and must know how to obtain the information which he needs to make up his mind, beyond the screaming headlines of the tabloid. The "Popular Department" of the public library, with its liberal traditions, and with all points of view represented upon its shelves, must play its part in making citizens aware of the great issues of the day and helping them to decide what to think about them—not told what to think.

"Le repos et la liberté ne sont pas compatibles," declared Rousseau, "il faut choisir." Whether he likes it or not, the librarian has a responsibility to choose . . . (4)

(c) **CULTURAL:** An effective alternative must be presented to the dominant synthetic "admass" culture. Men and women must be free to choose, and they are not really free to choose until there is a dynamic popular library which, together with other cultural agencies, can compete for attention on more equal terms, with the current sub-culture. Let each reader have his Peter Cheyney, but let him be made aware of other literature which is at least as worthy of his attention.

"Popular librarianship" has, of course, been practised, in fragmentary and ill recognised forms for a long time in Britain by a few devoted individuals. Unfortunately it will involve considerable expenditure. Hence it will receive much opposition from members of the profession who believe that, it is a "luxury," and that civilisation has "arrived."

In fact, for most of the world's population a decent, civilised life is only now becoming a practical possibility. It is in the underdeveloped countries of the world that we may expect, in due course, the rapid development of a dynamic popular librarianship charged with the task of stimulating semi-literate and often apathetic communities into an awareness of their destiny, helping them to build up a decent standard of living for themselves and to develop democratic institutions.

In all lands the "Popular Departments" of the public library movement will have to play their part in nourishing a humane democracy, with an international outlook. If this is not the destiny of the public library movement, then I do not know what is. As if to complement the quotation with which we began, it would be well to recall the words of Harold Laski to the 1935 L.A. Conference: "Do not let us be ashamed to be the advocates of freedom. The librarian is in charge of the tradition of civilised man. He is required by his office to be militant about its rights. He is, as Heine said, a soldier in the liberation war of humanity. Let him earn his reward for valour in that noblest of all conflicts."

*References:*

- (1) Edward Sidney, in *Adult education activities for public libraries*, U.N.E.S.C.O., 1950.
- (2) S. R. Ranganathan, in "Impressions of British Librarianship to-day," *Library Association Record*, Vol. 51, Jan., 1949.
- (3) S. R. Ranganathan and K. M. Sivaraman, *Library manual*, ch. 2.
- (4) cf. A.L.A.'s "Great issues programme," in *Booklist*, 44: 397, Aug., 1948.

### **Going Down!**

On two occasions recently, short-listed candidates have been told that the Authority was not prepared to pay more than a salary lower than the candidate's present one. In one case, my own, the salary offered was two increments lower.

Since the candidates' present salaries were given in their applications for the posts, there must have been some expectation that they were likely to accept. Which prompts me to ask: do Librarians really accept posts at a lower salary, and, if so, is this not one of the reasons for the lack of esteem in which the profession is held?

Surely any self-respecting Librarian should expect, and demand, some financial reward upon promotion: not merely the carrot of "future prospects" dangled before his nose.

J. LEE, *Kensington Public Libraries.*

### ***It's the same the whole world over***

"There were fifty resignations during the year; this is the highest figure on record... Sixty-eight per cent. of those who left had worked for less than two years: and if some way could be found to reduce this percentage it would relieve the burden on the senior staff considerably.... Some undoubtedly left because they disliked evening and Saturday work: one or two were offered higher salaries."

Johannesburg P.L. Annual Report, 1957-58.

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## Some Displays in Essex

by Peter G. Hayward, Essex County Library

The recent G.L.D. meeting on display called "The Peacock's Tail" brought the request "Let us know what you are doing in the way of displays." Here we are then—and having recovered from the correspondence in the April *Assistant* on display, it would seem timely to hoist the Essex colours again!

"**Sumer is a cummin in**" was the title of a display prepared at the appropriate time. The ingredients were a panel (about 5ft. by 1ft.) covered with dark blue crepe paper, on which were pasted stylised white paper "clouds." In between these, the title wound its way, in yellow cork letters. Colour photos of the country-side (from old calendar pictures) were cut to the shape of butterflies and fixed at various points around the panel. A jar of wild flowers and long grasses from nearby waste ground completed this display of books on summer activities. It rained, of course, until the display was taken down!

"**Music Makers**" brought together scores, biographies of musicians as well as books shelved at 780. Three vertical panels of Colorboard (about 24in. x 6in.) were used. A white silhouette of a 'cello, a violin, and a saxophone were cut from a sheet of music score, one being pasted on each panel. These were set up side by side about 4in. apart, and linked by a piece of white board representing a piano keyboard. Black colorboard was used for the black keys, and the title in orange cork letters mounted on these. The background consisted of strips of blue card each with an enlarged copy of a composer's signature in orange.

A little dreaming on the subject of books about islands produced the following ideas: a panel of blue crepe paper to which was fixed four pieces of irregularly shaped Essex board representing a group of islands. The title, in red cork letters, was mounted on these, one word per island—"Entirely surrounded by water." Below and to the right of the panel was a model desert island, on which grew two palm trees. The island was sandpaper on a blue base; the trees were made by winding brown gummed paper round a pencil, wedging cut-out palm-leaves in the top, and fixing the hollow trunk over a large nail driven through the base. The two features were linked by festooned white rope, and the books on islands from Rockall to Australia added.

At the beginning of the year, France was much in the news, and the following was set up for a topical display. Pages from a French newspaper covered the back of the stand. A map of France was mounted on card, cut out and set forward from the background. A small silk tricolour attached to a miniature flagpole pierced Bordeaux or thereabouts. To the right of the flag, across the rest of the map, the title "**Vive la France.**"

A few general comments. The crepe paper panels are made by spreading the paper over the board, round the edges and fixing on the reverse side only. A "cut-out" can be set forward by the simple device of a match-box glued to the back to fit and then to the background. This can also be done with certain peg-board fittings, and adds considerably to the effect of a display. The use of cork letters is to be recommended. They are available in various sizes and faces, can be painted any colour, are three-dimensional, can be re-used, and are reasonably priced. The silk flag mentioned can be purchased from large stores for 3s. plus 9d. for the flagpole, and is available in all national colours.

## *World Museum of Typography*

by Dorothy Harrop

*Gloucestershire County Libraries*

Mainz is not one of Germany's most beautiful cities, and so does not come in the average itinerary for tourists, but there we went, by motor scooter, one fiercely hot July morning, our object—a pilgrimage to the Gutenberg shrine. Here, in the municipal library of the inventor's native town, is the Gutenberg Museum of Typography, founded in 1900 to mark the occasion of Gutenberg's quincentenary.

Ever since its foundation, the Gutenberg Museum has been international in outlook and character. The scope of the exhibits covers the art of printing in every part of the world at all periods of history from the fifteenth century to the present day. Its wide range would thus seem to justify its claim to the title of World Museum of Typography. It is fitting that the birthplace of the great inventor should house this superb memorial, not a museum only, but the international centre for technical and historical research on the art of printing.

As a museum it has a fresh approach: the visitor is not wearied with an endless array of lifeless products and machinery. Instead every type of printing equipment is shown in action, from primitive hand moulds to rapid casting machines, from the wooden composing stick to its present day counterpart, from the first elementary Gutenberg press to the iron hand press, mechanical presses, and the latest rotary machines, and from the earliest to the most up-to-date illustration processes. An old paper mill can be seen, noisily stamping rags into pulp while sheets of paper are shaken skilfully and drawn from the vat. Medieval methods of book production and binding, in use before the invention of printing, are shown in a reconstructed monastic scriptorium.

Probably the most interesting exhibit of all is the Gutenberg printing shop. The visitor walks through the door and straight into the fifteenth century. Here is the complete workshop, having wooden printing press, with tympan, frisket and inkballs, founts of Gutenberg type, and a stove on which simmers a pot of molten type metal. Can it be real? Yes! for here is the printer, clad in leather apron, working at the press. As we watch, he carefully inks up the forme, positions the paper, lowers the platen and is later to be seen removing an exquisitely printed sheet from the press. On closer inspection, this proves to be a page of the 36-line Bible. These specimens are sold, when dry, to visitors for the equivalent of about 3s. 6d. per sheet.

The development of the museum was a slow process; its real prosperity dates from 1925 when there was arranged the exhibition called "Beautiful German books, 1900-1925." In honour of the occasion the Gutenberg printing shop was constructed. It was this, perhaps above all, that gave impetus to the Gutenberg idea both in Germany and abroad. The Gutenberg Museum at Mainz became the focus of attention of the whole printing world. The printing shop has been loaned to the organisers of various international exhibitions including the "Stitchting Amsterdam Rijnkanaal" in 1958 and the jubilee exhibition of the Gutenberghus in Copenhagen in 1953.

It was planned to open the museum in extended premises in 1940, but these hopes were shattered by the outbreak of war. The new building was repeatedly hit by bombs and finally destroyed in 1945. Fortunately, the entire collection of books and other priceless treasures was preserved, as it had previously been removed for safe keeping. After the war, the Gutenberg collection had again to be returned to the premises of the municipal library where it had previously been housed, and since that time annual exhibitions of outstanding merit have been arranged.

Among the notable treasures of the museum are: the "Fragment of the last judgment," generally claimed to be the oldest extant typographic print; a volume of the 42-line Bible; three books in the catholicon type; a copy of the Mainz Psalter of 1459; two volumes of the 48-line Bible of 1462; a copy of the Japanese Dharani-Sutra dated 768, printed from a wooden block in an edition of one million copies by order of the Empress Shotoku, and many more—altogether some 3015 incunabula.

Special attention is being given to the Gutenberg Library which strives to collect all the available literature connected with the art of printing. A special technical library, consisting of 20,000 bibliographic items, treating the history of printing all over the world, as well as a large collection of modern prints and other exhibition material, also belongs to the museum.

In 1946 the city of Mainz created a chair at the University for the study of typography, printing and the art of book production generally. This lent even greater importance to the nearby museum. Adjoining the room which houses the incunabula and an extensive collection of manuscripts, a study and reference library has been opened for the use of students. The Gutenberg College at the University now attracts students of printing and bibliography from all over the world.

The Gutenberg Gesellschaft, an international research society, was founded in 1901 to further the aims of the museum. Since that time, the Gesellschaft has produced some of the most important publications in the history of printing. In 1925 it made an international appeal to scholars for collaboration in compiling a jubilee publication to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the museum. This was the first issue of the "Gutenberg-Jahrbüch" which has been published annually ever since.

There is now hope, based on real foundation, that the home of the Gutenberg Museum will soon be re-built on an even more generous and lavish scale than before. Bibliographers the world over await the fulfilment of this hope.

## OUT OF THE **DEEP FREEZE**

Thanks to editorial "stock-piling" during the printing stoppage, all important news items are preserved for permanent reference in KEESING'S—*more than a stop-gap: An institution for all times.*

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## **Correspondence**

### ***A Kick in our Baggy "Cords"***

Mr. New's remarks on subject knowledge and the recent correspondence on examinations seem of little importance, being the weary story oft related in librarianship of splitting the same split hair for the umpteenth time. It's not that the examinations couldn't be improved, but that any improvement would be a mere drop in the ocean of vagueness and dilettantism that is librarianship. For how can anyone honestly believe that the examinations are of any lasting utility in the practical application of his or her job?

Examinations can only be regarded constructively, in relation to the present and future function of the examinees. The form of librarianship as practised in this country obviously demands no more than a rather low standard of education (our schooling sees to this, anyway) and the ability to adapt oneself to a particular mode of employment, as in any business house or factory. The theoretical expression manifested in the L.A. exams. is an artificial one and indeed must be an artificial one because librarianship cannot express any working theory bold enough to befit a comprehensive series of examinations.

There is, I submit, justification (if exams. are considered necessary) for papers similar to Part 3 of the Finals; e.g., Literature and Librarianship of Modern Literature, History, Technology, Music, Fine Arts, etc. There is a deal more sense in this from a "professional" point of view. The lawyer, the doctor and the scientist have a more defined and rigorous training and application in their work because of its comparative specificity. Unfortunately, and often understandably, their cultural and sociological outlook on life is narrow and warped to a considerable degree. Surely the librarian could make his contribution to society at this very level. Taking this for granted, as I do, there should be encouragement in the form of examinations dealing with such theory naked and unashamed of its divorce from the everyday routine of overdue notices and perusing the B.N.B.

I have made this point because, as stated above, the present examination standard is moronic and therefore it matters not a damn whether "Literature" stays or goes. Furthermore, the average librarian has about as much culture and commitment as he has guts and personality, and it's about time he was given a hearty kick in those baggy cords of his. If we want librarianship to be just "a job like any other," then by all means leave things in the pitiful morass that they are in to-day. If, however, we wish our work to be worth fighting for, in every sense of that word, then we shall require at the very least a minor revolution, which would, of course, entail a radical change of opinion within our ranks and consequently a jettisoning of the deadwood and drags who have no right to any professional or semi-professional status. The chief obstacles to any such change are not the many cosy semi-literate senior officials who would, I am sure, in most cases conveniently drop dead at the very mention of the word progress, but the rank and file, especially the inordinate number of women amongst us. Their all too frequent characteristics of narrow-mindedness, pettiness and complete lack of any social graces (especially in dealing with people) make them ideal counter hands but preclude them from any hope of dealing with a situation that demands a literate and/or generous approach. That is why I hope that

we will have more (and better) graduates especially on the female side, and that some day many of those graduates will be the products of a University of Librarianship.

I would only add that from the routines and methods viewpoint one can go only so far efficiently before extra effort is wasted. We have in most ways reached that point (or will the wrangle over charging systems go on for ever?). It is time we set our sights higher, made some attempt to become more socially integrated (if that is possible in this apathetic, mundane land of ours), to establish a University EDUCATION for librarians and purge the Association of its lethargy. It is not a matter of what constructive steps to take, but which must be taken first in order that the others may follow.

R. P. HEAD, *Tottenham Public Libraries.*

### **Mobility — More Thoughts**

I would like to suggest that the A.A.L. could help in the problems facing assistants who are thinking of changing their jobs. My idea is to have a file of information about all the authorities in the country. This file would be available to all assistants on application, and the contents would be gleaned from the same assistants. I am sure that an appeal for information of this sort would be answered gladly, without too much malice. The A.A.L. would be responsible for assembling and holding the file. On asking about a position with a certain authority one would receive, for example, the following report:

#### **COALTOWN :**

A very go-ahead authority. Plenty of scope for initiative, first-class bookstock. Chief keen, but does not interfere. Town itself a depressing place; live outside if possible.

#### **or LOAMSHIRE :**

Short of money, but they make good use of it. Rather a narrow scope and one must conform to chief's ideas. Lovely countryside; houses reasonably priced.

These are only intended as general examples and not full ones, but the idea is to have a more personal touch than the details given by the employing authority. These details are very full from some authorities, meagre from others and non-existent from a third group. Surely a person who is going to move house and incur expenses galore is entitled to know as much as possible about the position for which he is applying.

This scheme would not only work to the advantage of those looking for posts. It would eliminate the embarrassing situation which occurs when a short-listed candidate arrives for an interview, has a look round and decides he does not want the job. If appointed he has the awkward task of saying, "No, thank you." With fuller information about the post he would probably not have applied in the first place, thus saving time, trouble and expense.

One last plea to all authorities. It is shocking to hear of, and experience, cases where applications for library posts are not even acknowledged. The applicant is left wondering whether his effort arrived; he does not know if it was considered or if the post has been filled. This is sheer bad manners, as well as being bad business, and it should never happen. Please let our leaders demand that all applications for posts should be promptly acknowledged.

R. M. LYLE, *Herefordshire County Library.*

### **"Work with young people"**

In defending the Registration syllabus (*Assistant Librarian*, July) against some of the criticisms previously directed at it, Mr. Bakewell claims that no useful purpose would be served by introducing a compulsory section on work with young people. It is hard to believe that his remarks are based on any personal experience. A children's librarian should be able to perform many if not all of the functions of a teacher, and Mr. Bakewell surely does not suggest that the two or three years spent in training a teacher are completely wasted. Even if one believes that nothing can be usefully taught through the Registration course about story hour technique, simplified book arrangement, assistance with school projects, and so forth, it is surely undeniable that the good children's librarian must have a more than superficial knowledge of children's literature, including contemporary writings as well as the "classics." This knowledge certainly has nothing to do with "the knack of dealing with children," and could very well be acquired by studying for an examination.

It is true, of course, that some librarians are never in contact with children, just as some never classify and some never apply their knowledge of bibliography. But the potential value of the work done in junior departments and school libraries is surely great enough to receive specific and regular attention at both First Professional and Registration levels. Until this is done, many libraries will continue to neglect or mismanage a service which deserves the strongest possible support.

A. K. D. CAMPBELL, *Cumberland County Libraries*.

### **The Conference in retrospect**

Viewing the A.A.L. Conference in retrospect, I wonder whether it is not time that a different method of organisation were used. To a certain extent you gain new ideas, and it is interesting to hear some fresh viewpoints. But so much that is said at a conference has been heard before, and in some cases it is easy to foretell what will be said in a discussion group. I had the impression that the leaders of the groups felt that way too, or else, like some of us who attended, they were weary of discussing ideals which are put into practice so seldom in this country. Could there be more leaders and a variety of discussions, so that people could choose those they wished to attend and not be with the same group all the time? These are only vague suggestions and may be impractical, but it does seem to me that the conference is in danger of getting into a rut, something which should be avoided if possible—it occurs all too frequently in local government!

BARBARA J. COLLINS, *Portsmouth Public Libraries*.

### **University Assistants and the A.A.L.**

I am interested by our President's regret that few assistant librarians in special and university libraries belong to the A.A.L., and by Mr. Carter's expectation that those who do would not like the A.A.L. to become a trade union (*The Assistant Librarian*, v. 52, 1959, p. 140 and p. 145). Some regard the A.A.L. as an association for assistants in public libraries, and I have heard it suggested that assistant librarians in a university library would have no justification for requesting time off to attend an A.A.L. conference "because it is not our section." Some regard the A.A.L. as a society for immature librarians who have not grown enough for the L.A. and other sections. Personally, I like the vigorous discussion of A.A.L. conferences and would gladly attend one at which public library topics were not dominant. I should welcome the formation of a public libraries section to provide meetings about public librarianship, so that the branches of the L.A. and the

A.A.L. might provide for topics common to libraries of all kinds. Perhaps we should then have more than the present sporadic meetings to discuss, for example, cataloguing and architecture, which are welcome at section conferences, but do not logically belong to any section and would be better if open to members of all sections. Let there be a public libraries section and then let the L.A. branches and the A.A.L. arrange meetings to discuss problems common to all kinds of libraries, and see then if the A.A.L. will be regarded as for all assistant librarians.

Mr. Carter's expectation amazes me and I wonder what are his reasons. I should suppose that assistants in university and special libraries would benefit most from a union for librarians, for they have no NALGO to look after them. I want librarianship to be organised like a profession with free movement between libraries of different kinds. A union for librarians is likely to further this; a uniting of public librarians with other local government officers is likely to hinder it. Librarianship is not now organised as one profession in which one can make a career, with service in other libraries recognised on appointment to a post, and with one superannuation system. Instead, movement from one kind of library to another often involves falling to the minimum of the salary scale (or the age 25 position) and forfeiture of the previous employer's superannuation contributions (while participation in superannuation schemes devised for other professions produces even worse consequences than this). Apparently, only one group of librarians enjoy conditions like those of other professions, and then only as long as they remain civil servants. Compare the conditions of librarians who are not civil servants with, for example, teachers, who may work in schools of many kinds, yet, whether they stay in one school or move about, retain superannuation benefits and are entitled to a salary according to their qualifications, to the number of years spent in study and on National Service, and to their length of experience in any kind of school. They have a strong union without employers as members.

DAVID W. HOPE, *Reading University Library.*

## **Ministandards**

**by T. Brimelow, Manchester College of Science and Technology**

Although the Library Association and the Smaller Libraries Group have produced standards of service, it has been felt that a large number of libraries are still being neglected. Within the near future a Smallest Libraries Group will undoubtedly be formed, but it follows from the oft quoted Parkinson's Law that there will still be some libraries who have no group to belong to. For these a tentative organisation (MINIGROUP) has been set up and standards formulated for the guidance of the profession. These are set out in draft form.

**POPULATION:** The 7th Law of Library Science states that every library must serve somebody. MINIGROUP has no desire to trespass on the preserves of the potential Smallest Libraries Group or to stifle the formation of a Micro-libraries Group. The population served, therefore, must not be more than 100 and certainly not less than 10. The rateable value of such a community will probably be low, being confined to certain highland crofts, parts of Wiltshire, Cumberland and Salford; nevertheless, the following standards will help to overcome this slight difficulty.

**BOOKS:** Some previous standards have discussed book provision in

terms of the number per head. When working at such low levels as MINIGROUP it is wiser to reverse this procedure and talk about the number of heads per book. Thus we can speak of a maximum number of reads per book; we are now discussing *maximum* standards. These are more comforting. For instance, assume that our population is 79 and we have two books in our library. In the macro-system we would have 0.02531 books per head, which is atrocious. Ministandards show a much better figure of 39.5 heads per book. In order to keep this figure as comforting as possible it should always contain two digits, that is not less than 10.

STAFF: This problem in MINIGROUP is simplified by the preceding standard. Our largest community contains 100 heads and our lowest book figure is 10 heads per book. The largest number of books in any library will not, therefore, exceed 10. Any increase in this figure will automatically reduce the total number of books. These can be administered by one person who can spend most of his (or her) time "getting to know the stock." The type of person required will not need a high standard of intelligence and the post will provide profitable employment for the community idiot. It will be noticed that the smaller the community the higher is the numerical provision of staff, which will often be better than in many special libraries. The ratio of staff to population will never be less than 1 : 100.

EXPENDITURE: This is the rock on which most standards founder. MINIGROUP has solved the problem by applying the book standard principle. An example will make this clear. Assume that in our hypothetical community of 79 heads we have a really bad year; the annual expenditure soars disastrously to 10s., perhaps the Librarian needs a new begging bowl (minimum diameter 12in.). Using macro-standards the expenditure is 1.4845d., a shocking figure. Reckoning in heads per shilling we have  $\frac{10}{79} = 7.9$ . This is not a good figure, but we stipulated a bad year. It will be seen however, that if expenditure (the figure below the line) is reduced, the resultant will show an increase probably into double figures. The expenditure should, therefore, be small. If our library authority spent nothing on its service the expenditure figure would be given by  $\frac{10}{79}$  which is ridiculous in this context.

These ideas were put forward for discussion by MINIGROUP at the January, 1960, Commune. They are to that extent liable to considerable development, and it will no doubt be proved conclusively, where this draft only hints, that the smaller public library can show that it provides a better service than most of its Bigger Brothers.

### **The Logical Conclusion?**

A colleague has informed us that his son has recently been involved in the toils of examinations (school, not L.A.!). "Dad," he is reported to have remarked, "why should we have to remember things at school? If we had bigger and better libraries, we could go and look things up and needn't remember a thing!"

### **Film Review: "Reading to Learn"—August "Assistant."**

Please note: The sentence reading, "The sound track, which is *optional* . . ." should read "The sound track, which is *optical* . . ." The sound track is, of course, an integral part of the film.—Ed.





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